

CLAIMS

We

claim:

1. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis by automatically balancing the consumption of products between travelers who have different demand curves for the same product which is sold out at a given time prior to actual use of the product, said system comprising one or more computing elements, said one or more computing elements located locally or remotely across networks, said system comprising:

traveler communications platform to enable computer based communications between the travel products suppliers and a potential or existing traveler;

one or more sources of product information, said product information including any of: product specific data, present bookings, fare rates, individual traveler data, and historical data;

rule based processing system, said rule based processing system operational to process input/output data from/to said travelers in conjunction with said product information;

computer based requests from potential travelers to book products that are said sold out product;

a source of potential traveler alterable products, said alterable products including any of: delayable fare, voluntary modified, rule based selection, and

said rules based processing system intelligently exchanging lower priced products of said source with higher priced products from said computer based requests.

2. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said rule based processing is performed by one or more of: individual travel products supplier computing systems, a central Internet website for all travel products suppliers, and a central Internet website with web pages for each travel products supplier.

3. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said rule based system returns to said computer based requests conditions and terms of a possible match to their request, said possible match based on a rules based match from said source.

4. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 3, wherein said conditions and terms include at least price as calculated by said rules based systems using as an input one or more of: customer-sensitive yield management systems data, specific price parameters set by individual travel products suppliers, list price of the product, how long before departure the order was placed (urgency of the order), number of requesting travelers, how many travelers holding alterable fare products, how many travelers with the potential to give away their seat are booked on the product, number of available products on corresponding departures, personal data available on requesting travelers, sales promotion considerations, anticipated cost to the travel products suppliers to change the product, profit margin that the travel products supplier wishes to attain using the system, and past price statistics.

5. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said system uses one or more of the following criteria to determine the latest time by which the system confirms booking of a requested product:
 how long before departure the product was requested (urgency of the order), how many travelers with alterable based products are booked, how many travelers with the potential to give away their seat are booked, personal data available in the system on the requesting customer, and statistical data on the product confirmation times.
6. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein if there are no available seats for the requesting traveler, the system scans an existing booked travelers list and decides the order in which travelers should be approached using rules from said rule based processing system.
7. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said alterable based products comprise one or more of the following restrictions or conditions: rescheduling of the traveler's departure up to a designated time frame before departure, rebooking onto another mutually acceptable departure, financial reimbursement, the number of times the travel products supplier can postpone a traveler's departure, penalties for traveler initiated cancellation, cancellation of jointly arranged products.

8. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 6, wherein said order to approach travelers with alterable products is determined by said rule based system according to one or more of the following rules: price of the product, single vs. joint, type of traveler comprising age, membership of the travel products supplier's customer club, number of reschedules the customer has had so far, how long before departure the product was booked, booking status, financial status, luggage status.
9. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein for travelers selected for alteration, the system automatically coordinates newly available seats via electronic communication with a travel products supplier booking center.
10. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein travelers of said products voluntary modified can retrieve from said system possible modification fees in advance thereof.
11. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 10, wherein said system can either accept/or reject the modification request within a given time period and the modification fee is defined according to one or more of the following rules: list price of the product, fare type, time left before the departure, personalization of the travelers wishing to give away

their product, number of requesting travelers in the system, personalization of requesting travelers, whether or not the product is fully booked, past statistics, number of travelers with alterable products are on a specific departure, number of travelers wishing to give away their seats at the same time, and how long before departure the product was booked.

12. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 6, wherein said system selects travelers to cancel from said approached travelers from said list as per one or more of: product fare, how long before departure the cancellation takes place, whether the product is one way or two way, discount percentage on the price compared to an average list price, single/joint type in accordance with needs of the requesting traveler, membership/non-membership in an travel products supplier's frequent user club, personalization, age range, products bought by the traveler, past cancellations, seat status, and luggage status.
13. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said system offers cancellation incentives based on one or more of: personalization, available data on the traveler, available products on alternative departures, estimated profit from the requesting traveler, list price of the products, how long before departure was the cancellation, whether the client's product is one way or two way, market promotion considerations, statistics based on past data, number of requesting travelers in the system at the time, number

of travelers potentially willing to give up their seat in the system at the time, profit margin a travel products supplier is aiming for, demand on a travel products supplier's other departures, and how long before departure the ticket was booked.

14. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said requesting travelers interactively review options and corresponding effect on price during an online session, said options including any of: giving away the product if approached by the travel products supplier, willingness to give away the product if notified up to X hours before departure, willing to be approached to give away product for specified incentives, getting the option to cancel/postpone, and number of joint products.
15. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said system requesting travelers can order a travel packaged product.
16. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said use of said source results in alteration of entire travel packages.

17. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 1, wherein said system actively approaches customers and offers them a product or another service and the associated terms and conditions.

18. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 17, wherein the price that was offered will be computed according to one or more of: the list price, number of customers given the offer, personalization of the customers being given the offer, number of available seats, marketing promotion considerations, expected cost of an unused seat to the travel products supplier, the profit margin the travel products supplier wishes to achieve from the system, and statistics of past prices.

19. An e-commerce system that increases revenues of a travel products supplier on a per product use basis, as per claim 17, wherein the system can offer packages instead of separate products.

20. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation before actual use of the tickets, said method comprising:
 - receiving one or more requests from potential travelers;
 - determining if seats are available, if so, booking said request, else
 - generating a list of potential tickets which can be delayed;

using rules of said rules based system: determining a selection order to approach said potential delayable tickets, said rules including one or more of: recognizing delayable based tickets, noting travelers requesting cancellation, determining travelers most likely to give-up their tickets; matching said requesting potential travelers to the best available delayable ticket; compensating said delayed ticket traveler, and booking said matched ticket for said received request.

21. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said method is performed over any of: the Internet, landline telephone system, mobile telephone system.

22. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said rule based system processes said method by one or more of: individual travel products suppliers computing systems, a central Internet website for all travel products supplier, and a central Internet site with web pages for each travel products supplier.

23. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said rule based generates conditions and terms for said match.

24. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 23, wherein said conditions and terms include at least ticket price as calculated by said rules based system using as an input one or more of: customer-sensitive yield management systems data, specific price parameters set by individual travel products suppliers, list price, how long before departure the order was placed (urgency of the order), number of requesting travelers, how many travelers holding cancellation fare tickets, how many travelers with the potential to give away their seat are booked, number of available tickets on corresponding departures, personal data available on requesting travelers, sales promotion considerations, anticipated cost to the travel products supplier to change the ticket, profit margin that the travel products supplier wishes to attain using the system, and past price statistics.

25. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said system uses one or more of the following criteria to determine the latest time by which the rules based system confirms booking of a requested ticket:

how long before departure the ticket was requested (urgency of the order), how many travelers with cancellation based tickets are booked, how many travelers with the potential to give away their seat are booked, personal data available in the system on the requesting customer, and statistical data on the ticket confirmation times.

26. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said

cancellation based tickets comprise one or more of the following restrictions or conditions:
 rescheduling of the traveler's departure up to a designated time frame before departure,
 rebooking onto another mutually acceptable departure, financial reimbursement, the number
 of times the travel products supplier can postpone a traveler's departure, penalties for
 traveler initiated cancellation, cancellation of jointly arranged tickets.

27. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently
 exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said order to
 approach travelers with cancelable tickets further comprises any of the following parameters:
 price of the ticket, single vs. a joint ticket, type of traveler comprising age, membership of
 the travel products supplier's customer club, number of reschedules the customer has had so
 far with their ticket, how long before departure the ticket was booked, booking status,
 financial status, luggage status.

28. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently
 exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein for travelers
 selected for cancellation, the method automatically coordinates newly available seats via
 electronic communication with a booking center.

29. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently
 exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said
 voluntary cancellation travelers are presented with possible cancellation fees in advance
 thereof.

30. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said system can either accept/or reject the cancellation request within a given time period and a cancellation fee is defined according to one or more of the following rules: list price, fare type, time left before the departure, personalization of the travelers wishing to give away their ticket, number of requesting travelers in the system, personalization of requesting travelers, whether or not the departure is fully booked, past statistics, number of travelers with cancelable ticket are on a specific departure, number of travelers wishing to give away their seats at the same time, and how long before departure the ticket was booked.

31. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said method selects travelers to actually cancel from said approached travelers from said list as per one or more of: ticket fare, how long before departure the cancellation takes place, whether the ticket is a one way or a two way ticket, discount percentage on the ticket price compared to an average list price, single/joint ticket in accordance with needs of the requesting traveler, membership/non-membership in a travel product supplier's frequent flyer club, personalization, age range, tickets bought by the traveler, past cancellations, seat status, and luggage status.

32. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said

cancellation incentives are based on one or more of: personalization, available data on the traveler, available seats on alternative departures, estimated profit from the requesting traveler, list price of the tickets, how long before departure was the cancellation, whether the client's ticket is one way or two way, market promotion considerations, statistics based on past data, number of requesting travelers in the system at the time, number of travelers potentially willing to give up their seat in the system at the time, profit margin a travel product supplier is aiming for, ticket demand on a travel product supplier's other departures, and how long before departure the ticket was booked.

33. A method of doing business incorporating a rules based system to intelligently exchange travel tickets on overbooked transportation, as per claim 20, wherein said method includes an Internet based method enabling interactive review of options and corresponding effect on price during an online session, said options including any of: giving away the ticket if approached by a travel product supplier, willingness to give away the ticket if notified up to X hours before departure, willing to be approached to give away ticket for specified incentives, getting the option to cancel/postpone the trip, and number of joint tickets.